

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5548

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 2521

FOR EA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ZURHELLEN FROM AMBASSADOR

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, PINT, MARR, PARM, MPOL, OTRA, AS (BILLY SNEDDEN)

SUBJ: FORMER OPPOSITION LEADER'S VIEWS; UPCOMING TRIP TO NEW
YORK AND WASHINGTON

REF: STATE 62861

1. WITH PARLIAMENTARY RECESS STARTING APRIL 23, WE CAN EXPECT
A NUMBER OF GOA PARLIAMENTARIANS TO BE OFF ON ORIENTATION AND
PLEASURE TRIPS TO US AND ELSEWHERE. PARLIAMENT RESUMES SESSION
MAY 13 AND SITS UNTIL MAY 29, WHEN IT MAY RECESS UNTIL
MID-AUGUST.

2. BILLY SNEDDEN, FORMER LEADER OF OPPOSITION, TOLD ME APRIL
22 THAT HE WILL BE MAKING "WORKING TRIP" TO US APRIL 27-MAY 5,
FOLLOWED BY WEEK IN LONDON AND THEN A VISIT TO ZURICH. HIS
PURPOSE IS TO SEE BANKERS AS WELL AS REPRESENTATIVES OF
COMPANIES WITH INTERESTS IN AUSTRALIA; AND I GATHER THAT HE
WILL BE INTERESTED IN DOING SOME BUSINESS CONNECTED WITH HIS
PRIVATE LAW PRACTICE. WHILE IN NEW YORK HE PROPOSES TO COME
DOWN TO WASHINGTON FOR DAY OR TWO TO TALK WITH IMF, BUT HE
EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN SEEING DEPUTY SECRETARY
INGERSOLL, FOR WHOM HE HAS SPECIAL REGARD, IN ORDER TO DISCUSS
ECONOMIC TRENDS IN US AND AUSTRALIA. IF DEPUTY SECRETARY IS
UNAVAILABLE, HE WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE ANYBODY ELSE IN
DEPARTMENT THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTED.

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3. SNEDDEN SEEMED IN GOOD SPIRITS AND WAS MOST FRIENDLY.

HE PROPOSES TO LIE LOW FOR NEXT YEAR OF SO, NOT CHALLENGING FRASER, BUT RATHER GIVING HIM HIS SUPPORT. SNEDDEN NEVERTHELESS FEELS THAT MOST OF THE LIBERAL PARTY'S RANK AND FILE, NOTABLY STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS, SUPPORT HIS MORE LIBERAL OUTLOOK IN CONTRAST TO MALCOLM FRASER'S MORE CONSERVATIVE POSITION. HE SAYS HE WAS DEFEATED BY LIBERAL PARTY'S PARLIAMENTARY GROUP BY A MARGIN OF 37-27.

4. SNEDDEN REMAINS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH ECONOMIC ISSUES, FEARING THE COLLAPSE OF MANY COMPANIES HERE IN 1976 WHICH ARE ALREADY DEEPLY COMMITTED ON SHORT-TERM FINANCE AND WILL BE CAUGHT IN A CREDIT SQUEEZE AND FORCED TO THE WALL.

5. I TOOK OCCASION OF OUR GENERAL CONVERSATION TO HAND OVER DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL'S LETTER TO SNEDDEN REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF INDONESIA GOING NUCLEAR, AS WELL AS GIVING HIM, ONCE AGAIN, OUR VIEWS ON THE SO-CALLED SCHLESINGER DOCTRINE. ON BOTH POINTS HE SEEMED SATISFIED.

6. SNEDDEN'S VIEW ON US ROLE IN EAST ASIA WERE EXPRESSED SIMPLY AND AFFIRMATIVELY ALONG LINES THAT SUGGEST THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE ON THAT ISSUE AMONST TOP LIBERAL PARTY LEADERS.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: COULD DEPUTY SECRETARY OR SOME OTHER LEADING DEPT. OFFICIAL MEET WITH SNEDDEN?
GREEN

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